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Evening Telegraph (Derby, Derbyshire, England) · Sat, Dec 23, 1989 · Page 42
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Saint Lawrence

● Sex symbol Marilyn Monroe — just one of the roles singing star Stephanie Lawrence (top) has played in her career.

MUSICAL star Stephanie Lawrence is planning to become the champion of thousands of disfigured British children . . .

by Derek Robins

The bubbly blonde star of Evita, Starlight Express and Time hopes to establish a charity to help children born with disfiguring birthmarks such as port wine stains.

Dressed all in black, Stephanie revealed: "I heard about this revolutionary laser treatment which can get rid of birthmarks and port wine stains while I was in America. I'd love to form a charity and perhaps be part of a business which could bring the treatment over here and offer it free to people who can't afford it."

Stephanie, who sings Don't Cry For Me Argentina and I Don't Know How To Love Him in ITV's spectacular The Music Of Andrew Lloyd Webber (tonight, 11pm) went on: "My heart goes out to these kids who have to start their lives with such birthmarks, especially if they are on the face. Hopefully, this treatment would put an end to such children being ridiculed at school as children can be so cruel if someone looks different.

"I first got interested in this because some of my friend's children have birthmarks and while I was in Australia I met a girl who had a port wine stain over half of her face.

"Of course the big problem at the moment is money, the treatment is expensive and the laser machines cost about £50,000. There are only two in this country at the moment but if we managed to bring more over they could also be used to help people who have been disfigured in car accidents as the treatment can decrease the amount of scar tissue."

The 34-year-old actress who shot to fame as Eva Peron in the stage musical Evita 10 years ago is well known for her charitable works. She once ran the London Marathon and raised £15,000 for the Multiple Sclerosis Society and she has been a leading light in the campaign to stop the export of live animals.

Stephanie, who shares her Victorian town house in Fulham with a mongrel called Scruffy, Tiggy the cat and a red 1973 Mercedes named Peron, hasn't looked back since she was plucked from obscurity and into the limelight of a Lloyd Webber stage musical.

Since then she has played Marilyn Monroe in Marilyn The Musical, donned her roller skates for Starlight Express, recreated the Marlene Dietrich role from the film The Blue Angel, done Time, appeared in three Royal Variety Performances and starred in her first movie Buster.

But 1989 has been even better for the former Pan's People dancer. At the beginning of the year she was in Hungary playing the role of Carlotta in the re-make of the 1925 horror classic The Phantom Of The Opera opposite American actor Robert Englund who is an 80s movie legend because of his appearances as Freddy in The Nightmare On Elm Street films.

It has no connection with the Lloyd Webber musical and, in fact, Stephanie hardly got to sing a note in the movie which was released in Britain in the spring.

"The worst scene for me was when I had to sit in the bath for a whole day," moaned Stephanie. "The crew who got it ready made it so hot that it was like sitting on top of a kettle! It was very uncomfortable . . . give me a cold bath anytime!"

Ironically she almost missed getting the prestigious part because on the same day she was asked to do a read-through of the script as she was about to go on holiday to France "I had the choice of changing my ticket or going to the audition. Luckily I made the right decision," she declared.

Now on the verge of international movie stardom, Stephanie still loves to stay close to her theatrical roots. In the summer she came to the rescue and recreated the part of Eva Peron in the Australian production of Evita after actress Julie Covington suddenly quit

She had just a week to rehearse the rol which she hadn't played for seven years an she had to get to the other side of the worl in time for opening night. As you've guessed the three-month run Down Under was ye another success for the girl from Haylin Island.

Certainly things are still very much on th go for Stephanie who has no plans to marr her long-time boyfriend John Garland eve though she would one day love to hav children.

She is co-starring in the pantomim Cinderella with Lionel Blair at Bromley an from March she is in the musical Blues I The Night which will tour Britain befor going into the West End.

In spite of her happy disposi tion there have been a few disappointments and regret along the road to stardom. He father died when she was just 1 and never saw her make the bi time and she still experience physical discomfort since a stag accident suffered during Star light Express four years ago.

She suffered serious hamstring injurie after a fellow performer crashed into her an she is still undergoing physiotherapy an ultra-sound treatment for the condition which makes it difficult for her to dc energetic dance routines and painful for he to sit down for long periods.

"It is getting better slowly and surely th natural way," says Stephanie who is spend ing some of Christmas with her best friend – her Mum. "She is the one who tells me th truth," declared Stephanie whose ide Christmas gift would be a computer to d her accounts on.

In the meantime her main unfulfille ambition is to play her heroine and lookalik Lana Turner in a stage musical or pla "Hers is a fascinating story," said Stephani "she became the Sweater girl when she wa just 17 and then she had a load of lovers. I fact, her daughter actually shot one of them

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